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English Land Restoration  
League

Among the Suffolk  
labourers with the...1891

London

1891

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# ENGLISH LAND RESTORATION LEAGUE.

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SPECIAL REPORT, 1891.

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AMONG THE

## SUFFOLK LABOURERS

WITH THE

### "RED VAN"

*(April 16th—October 20th, 1891)*

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PRICE ONE PENNY.

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LONDON:

OFFICES OF THE ENGLISH LAND RESTORATION LEAGUE

8, DUKE STREET, ADELPHI, W.C.

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## ENGLISH LAND RESTORATION LEAGUE

SPECIAL REPORT. 1891

VOLUME III

## SUFFOLK LABOURERS

WORK

"RED VAN"

1891 100 000 000 000 000

PRICE ONE PENNY.

LONDON

OFFICES OF THE ENGLISH LAND RESTORATION LEAGUE

8, DUKES STREET, ADELPHI, W.C.

1891

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*The Real Bearings of the Land Question.*

Dr. M. FLÜRSCHHEIM

[illegible]

## SPECIAL REPORT, 1891.

AMONG THE

# SUFFOLK LABOURERS

## “RED VAN”

PRICE ONE PENNY.

OFFICES OF THE ENGLISH LAND RESTORATION LEAGUE,  
8, DICK STREET, ADELPHI, W.C.

1844

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### Offices:

8, DUKE STREET, ADELPHI, LONDON, W.C.

All Communications respecting the League should be addressed to the Secretaries at the above address. The Organising Secretary will be glad to address meetings on the Land Question in any town or village where local friends can provide a suitable hall.

The Campaign of the Land Restoration Van (1891) being now concluded the Secretaries are in a position to arrange Special Lectures on "Life in our Villages", Land and Labour in Town and Country", and similar subjects, by the various Lecturers who have been travelling with the "Red Van" in Suffolk.

## THE LAND RESTORATION VAN: REPORT.

### I.—REASONS FOR THE CAMPAIGN.

DURING the first seven years of its existence, the work of the English Land Restoration League was, almost of necessity, chiefly confined to London and the large towns, but the discussion of the agricultural land question always formed an important part of its propaganda. The publication of the detailed report of the Census of 1881, about the time that the League was founded, established on a firm statistical basis the fact, that the agricultural districts were being steadily denuded of their population, and that the farm-workers were every year being drafted, by the hundred thousand, into the labour markets of the towns. That this disturbance of the balance of population must have a serious effect upon the food supply of the country as a whole, and upon the labour problems of the towns in particular, was sufficiently obvious; and a careful study of the evidence collected and published by the Royal Commissions on the Housing of the Working Classes (1885), on Trade Depression (1886), and on the Sweating System (1888); by the Select Committee on Town Holdings (1886); and by statistical experts in the *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, showed that these effects were more serious and far-reaching than was at first suspected. The first and most obvious was the reduction of the earnings of unskilled labour, not so much by the reduction of the wages paid per hour, as by the increasing uncertainty and irregularity of the work. For instance, while the pay of the dock labourer remained constant at 5d. an hour, his average weekly earnings were reduced, during the sixteen years preceding the great strike, by nearly 70 per cent., or in other words, fell from 23s. per week to 8s. per week; because, owing to the enormous increase of competition among the dockers, there was only about two days' work a week on the average for each applicant.<sup>5</sup> In consequence of the influx of the agricultural immigrants, or of the London workers whom they displaced, over-crowding in the slums was aggravated, rents increased, sanitary progress hindered, and the death-rate and the sickness-rate kept up to a disgracefully high point.

The failure of the South London Gas Stokers' strike in the winter of 1889-90, and the recurring difficulties of the Dockers' Union after its great victory a few months earlier, proved to the working men of London that so long as the immigration from the villages continued, the raising of the wages of unskilled labour would always be very difficult, and often quite impossible. Thus a

<sup>5</sup> See First Report of the Royal Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes, p. 16, and Mr. Tillet's evidence before the Lords' Committee on the Sweating System, Q. 12670, &c.

ready hearing was accorded to the lecturers of the League when, collecting and comparing these facts, they pointed out the inseparable union between the Land Question and the Labour Question, and urged the town workers to unite with the agricultural labourers and the miners against the common enemy of all industry—landlordism. The Executive had, however, long felt the necessity of a direct appeal to the agricultural labourers themselves, and various attempts which had been made from time to time in this direction served at once to show the great necessity and importance of such work, and to reveal the difficulties which attended it. Special literature was circulated, and meetings were held, wherever an opening could be found in the country districts. But now that the agricultural labourer had a vote, and could himself assist in his own emancipation, the time had plainly come for a much more systematic appeal.

One of the principal difficulties of country work has always been that, in many of the places which it is most desirable to reach, either there is no suitable hall, or the halls which exist are not available for League meetings. The Executive therefore resolved, after careful consideration, to open a Special Fund, with the object of establishing a Land Restoration Van, which should serve as a means of conveying a large quantity of literature for distribution in the villages, and also furnish a platform for the meetings, as well as sleeping and living accommodation for the lecturer. This Fund, which a member of the Executive started by a donation of £50 in January last, reached £265 3s. in the total: a list of the subscriptions, and an account of their expenditure is appended to this Report. A Van, originally intended for Parcels Post work, was obtained, and altered and fitted at a small cost for an experimental campaign. The experience of a summer's "gipsying" has suggested some desirable improvements, but the testimony of the lecturers is that the Van has well served its main purpose, and that as a temporary dwelling-place it was not much inferior either in size or comfort to the average sleeping-room of an agricultural labourer's cottage!

## II.—THE PLAN OF THE CAMPAIGN.

Much thought was given by the Executive to the discovery of the best method for carrying out their proposed campaign.

The first suggestion, that the Van should visit the country towns, where comparatively large audiences might be gathered, in the hope of reaching the labourers in the villages by means of reports in the local newspapers, was promptly negatived for reasons which experience has since shown to be well-founded. The labourers cannot be reached by means of newspapers, as for the most part they rarely read them. Moreover, the towns can usually be reached by other methods, and in the winter, when the villages are less accessible. It was therefore resolved to select a comparatively small area and to work a county, or more than one county if possible, thoroughly, by means of village meetings.

The question of organisation was also felt to be one of prime importance. Unless the labourers could be put into the way of themselves doing something, it was certain that our meetings would be a

mere ripple on the surface of village life, without lasting results. But here a difficulty presented itself. Even if there were a reasonable probability that any considerable number of agricultural labourers would join the League—a subscription even so small as one shilling being a large tax upon a labourer's scanty wages—it did not appear likely that a League having its headquarters in London could effectively organise labourers in country villages. Yet the Executive felt that it was above all things necessary to get the labourers into some organisation which could give effect to the principles which the League advocated at its meetings.

At this point the Eastern Counties Labour Federation invited the Executive to send their Van into Suffolk. The Federation, established in May, 1890, had already about 2,500 members belonging to a number of branches which had been founded in the villages round Ipswich. The labourers' leaders, feeling that the Land Question was at the bottom of the Labour Question, were prepared to co-operate with the League in a campaign on behalf of the Land for the People. Some correspondence followed with the officers of the Federation, and the Executive—having heard the reports of Mr. H. B. Holding and of Mr. Verinder, who visited Ipswich on different occasions as delegates from the League—resolved to accept the invitation of the Federation, and to urge the labourers at their meetings to join that body. It may be well to state at once that the arrangement then made has been faithfully adhered to on both sides, and that both the League and the Federation have the best reason to congratulate themselves on the results of their co-operation.

The meetings were announced by means of posters, each containing a list of a week's meetings. In the first few weeks of the campaign, the advertising was done through the local bill-posters; but experience soon suggested a more effective and, as it happened, a cheaper method of distributing the notices through the post, which, while entailing an increase of work at the London office, has, by the unanimous testimony of the lecturers, answered admirably.

The "Red Van", arriving at a village, in accordance with the announcements, early in the forenoon, was stationed in as prominent a position as possible. Its colour, "post office red", sufficiently striking and not resembling that adopted by either of the political parties, soon made it the object of much curiosity, and two large cartoons, representing landlordism in action, which were always displayed upon it, appealed during the whole day even to the most illiterate passer-by, and brought many enquiries for further information. The next step, was to enlist the help of the school-children, who have throughout proved most willing advertising-agents. A pictorial leaflet, with a red-ink notice of the meeting, was distributed at noon to the children as they left the village school, and verbal notice given of the exact spot at which the meeting would take place. During the day other leaflets were distributed to cottagers; enquiry made as to the social condition of the village; and much quiet propagandist work carried on by means of personal interviews, any known friends of the movement in the place being specially visited.

The meetings were almost invariably held in the open air at 7.30 or 8 p.m. The attendance varied greatly according to the population of the village, the weather, and the circumstances of the people; but the attendance was always large in proportion to the population, and

frequently the meeting consisted of practically the whole of the labouring men in the place with a good number of the women. Mr. W. H. Boon, who was in charge of the horse and Van during the whole campaign, usually opened the meeting by a brief speech, which was followed by an address of about an hour's duration from the special lecturer, after which an attempt was always made to excite a discussion. As in some villages which the Van visited our meeting is said to have been the first for many years, it is hardly surprising that the attempt was frequently unsuccessful.

Local grievances—the enclosure of the common, the misappropriation of the rent of poor's land, and the like—often afforded a text for the lecture, which always concluded with an invitation to join the E.C.L.F., and to use the union not only as a means of obtaining better wages, healthier homes, and the like, but also as a means to make their votes effective with a view to the abolition of landlordism.

At the end of the meeting the names of those willing to join the Federation were taken down, and the men themselves elected a treasurer and a secretary *pro tem*, and decided upon a meeting-place for the branch. All these particulars were at once forwarded to the General Secretary of the Federation in Ipswich, who arranged a second meeting at the earliest possible date in order to complete the local organisation. In no case were any subscriptions collected by the League's representatives on behalf of the Federation.

As a rule, the programme of meetings arranged by the Secretary, usually in consultation with Mr. Robinson, of the E.C.L.F., was carried out with the precision of a railway time-table. In a very few cases, through the unforeseen coincidence of the meeting with the village harvest-supper, or through the occurrence of an unusually heavy storm where no indoor meeting-place was available, the arrangements had to be modified or abandoned. But even where no shelter could be had, "a little rain" did not usually produce much effect upon the meeting; a capital gathering was held, for instance, in a steady rain, at Chillesford—a small village, not possessing any sort of meeting-place, without an inn, and not affording even a shed for the horse.

The following is a complete list of the meetings:—

APRIL.—16, Stoke by Nayland\*; 17, Capel St. Mary\*; 18, Tattingstone†; 19, Ipswich (open-air)\*; 20, Witnesham\*; 21, Otley\*; 22, Framden\*; 23, Debenham\*; 24, Earl Soham\*; 25, Framlingham\*; 26, Framlingham\*; 27, Dennington\*; 28, Peasenhall†; 29, Yoxford†; 30, Darsham†.

MAY.—1, Middleton†; 2, Theberton†; 4, Dunwicht; 5, Blythburgh†; 6, Wangford†; 7, Southwold; 8, Wrentham†; 9, Kessingland†; 11, Carleton Colville†; 12, Lowestoft; 13, Blundeston†; 14, Gorleston; 15, Belton†; 16, Somerleyton†; 17, Yarmouth; 18, Beccles†; 19, Bungay; 20, Halesworth; 21, Southelmham†; 22, Fressingfield†; 23, Stradbroke†; 25, Eye; 26, Mellis†; 27, Diss; 28, Botesdale†; 29, Gislegham†; 30, Mendesham\*.

JUNE.—1, Cottont†; 2, Stowupland†; 3, Earl Stonham\*; 4, Coddensham\*; 5, Blakenham; 9, Woodbridge; 10, Sutton\*; 11, Shottisham†; 12, Butley†; 13, Orford†; 15, Chillesford; 16, Blaxhall†; 17, Snape†; 18, Friston†; 19, Aldeburgh; 20, Leiston; 22, Saxmundham; 23, Wickham Market†; 24, Charsfield†; 25, Brandeston†; 26, Pettaugh†; 27, Crowsfield†; 29, Gosbeck†; 30, Henley\*.

JULY.—1, Ashbocking\*; 2, Swilland\*; 3, Clopton\*; 4, Grundisburgh\*; 6, Little Bealings†; 7, Waldringfield†; 8, Kirtton\*; 9, Trimley†; 10, Walton†; 11, Felixstowe†; 13, Bucklesham\*; 14, Ipswich\* (Cornhill); 15, Washbrook†; 16, Burstall\*; 17, Offton†; 18, Needham Market\*; 20, Buskham†; 21, Rattlesden†; 22, Woolpit†; 23, Hesselst†; 24, Thurston†; 25, Great Wheltenham†; 27, Bradley St. George†; 28, Cockfield†; 29, Brettenham†; 30, Hitcham†; 31, Bildeston\*.

AUGUST.—1, Lavenham; 3, Monk's Eleight†; 4, Great Walsingham†; 5, Acton†; 6, Long Melford†; 7, Sudbury; 8, Bures St. Mary†; 10, Leavenheath†; 11, Axminster†; 12, Boxford†; 13, Polstead†; 14, Layham†; 15, Hadleigh†; 17, Kersey†; 18, Edwardston†; 19, Alpheton†; 20, Glemsford†; 21, Cavendish†; 22, Clare†; 24, Stoke-by-Clare†; 25, Haverhill†; 26, Withersfield†; 27, Great Bradley†; 28, Cowling†; 29, Gazeley†; 31, Moulton†.

SEPTEMBER.—1, Exning†; 2, Dalham†; 3, Lidgate†; 4, Wickhambrook†; 5, Horningsheath†; 7, Bury St. Edmunds†; 8, Ixworth†; 9, Stanton†; 10, Walsham-le-Willow†; 11, Wattisfield†; 12, Worham†; 14, Palgrave†; 15, Redgrave†; 16, Hopton†; 17, Barningham†; 18, Honington†; 19, Ingham†; 21, Fornham All Saints†; 22, Risby†; 23, Great Saxham; 24, Barrow†; 25, Kentford†; 26, Mildenhall†; 28, Eriswell†; 29, Lakenheath†; 30, Brandon.

OCTOBER.—1 (Brandon meeting prevented by heavy rain); 2, Thetford†; 3, Thetford†; 5, Troston†; 6, Great Barton†; 7, Pakenham†; 8, Badwell Ash†; 9, Bacton†; 10, Haughley†; 12, Elmswell†; 13, Great Finborough†; 14, STOWMARKET; 15, COMBET; 16, Creeting St. Mary; 17, Needham Market\*; 18, Needham Market\*; 19, Bramford†; 20, IPSWICH\* (Co-operative Hall).

After careful consideration, and consultation with local friends, it was decided not (as a rule) to attempt Sunday meetings. In some of the towns, however, it was found possible to arrange a meeting on that day, as at Ipswich, Framlingham and Needham Market; the meeting at the first-named place on the afternoon of Sunday, April 19th, being one of the largest of the whole campaign.

The larger villages selected for the meetings being usually not more than five miles apart, labourers from the smaller intervening villages were able to attend, and every opportunity of circulating literature in places where it was not possible to hold a meeting, or which were too small to afford a sufficient audience, was carefully utilised.

The twenty-seven weeks' lecturing work of the campaign was distributed as follows:—

April 16	—	April 25	Fredk. Verinder.
April 26	—	May 31	Shaw Maxwell.
June 1	—	June 7	Patrick Hennessy.
June 8	—	June 21	Fredk. Verinder.
June 22	—	July 12	Shaw Maxwell.
July 13	—	July 25	Fredk. Verinder.
July 26	—	Sept. 13	Shaw Maxwell.
Sept. 14	—	Sept. 27	George Palmer.
Sept. 23	—	Oct. 20	Henry Anckell.

\* At places marked thus a Branch of Eastern Counties Labour Federation was already in existence.

† New Branch E.C.L.F., formed at Van meeting.

‡ Branch of "Arch's Union" at these places.



The closing meeting of the campaign was held in the Co-operative Hall, Ipswich, on Oct. 20th. Mr. Geo. T. Ratcliffe, General Treasurer of the Eastern Counties Labour Federation, presided. A cordial vote of thanks to the League "for the great services rendered to the cause of the agricultural labourers during the six months' campaign" was moved by Mr. Joseph Robinson, seconded by Mr. E. Blake, the General Secretary and President of the Federation respectively; and carried unanimously. Mr. Verinder having replied on behalf of the League, Mr. Anckell moved:—

That the principal cause of the poverty of the workers in the agricultural districts, as well as in the towns, is the monopoly by the few of the Land, which is the common property of all. This meeting, therefore, pledges itself to use its best endeavours to send to Parliament representatives who will demand that those who hold the land shall pay for the privilege to its rightful owners, the People, and so make possible the abolition of the taxation which now presses upon labour and its products.

The resolution was seconded by Mr. W. H. Boon, and carried unanimously.

### III. RESULTS OF THE CAMPAIGN.

When the Executive resolved to attempt the task of carrying the doctrines of the League into the heart of the agricultural districts of England, they were not unconscious that in a very large degree they were venturing upon untried ground. The wisdom of this new departure could only be justified by satisfactory results.

Of the success which has attended their efforts in the villages of Suffolk they desire to speak with caution and moderation. They feel, however, quite safe in affirming that those results fully warrant them in recommending operations of a similar kind, but on a greater scale, next year.

The success of the experiment has, indeed, exceeded the expectations of the Executive. The lecturers of the League were not only received on all occasions with manifestations of the utmost goodwill by the agricultural labourers; but in a great many instances the meetings exceeded in size and importance those organised in the same districts on behalf of the rival political parties.

In many villages practically the entire male adult population were enrolled as members of the Eastern Counties Labour Federation by the League's representative at the close of the meeting. The traditional lethargy of these poor workers has already in some degree been supplanted by an enthusiasm which may at least enable them to redress some of the worst inequalities under which they have hitherto laboured.

The principal work of the Red Van has been, of course, always and everywhere, to preach the doctrine of the Land for the People. But hardly less important than this—and much more tangible in its immediately apparent results—has been the building-up of the labourers' organisation where branches had been already founded; the lecturer addressed their members on the Land Question, and almost invariably succeeded in adding to their number. In villages where no branches had hitherto existed, a branch was almost always formed; in towns,

the formation of a branch was seldom attempted, as the workers engaged in the staple industry of the place were usually already organised in unions of their own.

No. of meetings held	...	...	...	...	165
No. of places visited	...	...	...	...	156
Existing branches (E.C.L.F.) visited	...	...	...	...	41
New branches formed (E.C.L.F.)	...	...	...	...	83

The general secretary of the Federation stated at the Ipswich meeting that during the campaign the number of members in that body had been raised from about 2,500 to 7,128. This statement was made before the officers of the Federation had had time to follow up the last few weeks' work of the campaign and to gather up the results. Moreover, the number of members immediately enrolled by no means expresses the full effect of the work done by the Van. Many men, especially in places where there has never been a union, or where previous attempts at organisation have broken down, gave but a half promise at the first meeting, and did not fully make up their minds till afterwards. In one place, for instance, where ten members were enrolled at the meeting, seven more joined next morning, and in a few weeks the total had reached thirty-one. There were about fifty men present at this meeting, and the place was notoriously a "backward" one. Wherever it has been possible to trace the history of the branches established by the Van, a considerable growth in numbers has always taken place. The hope expressed at the beginning of the campaign, that the Federation might be 10,000 strong before the end of the year, seems less unlikely of realisation in October than it did six months before.

It is very improbable that this movement—so vigorous but still so young—will produce much tangible effect at the *next* General Election. Doubtless, candidates will be more severely heckled than ever before, and those who, like Mr. Lacy Everett, the candidate for Woodbridge, have most sympathy with the labourers, will be heartily supported by the Federation. But, as the Union grows, the sense of their true strength will grow among the labourers, and it is beginning to dawn upon them that once they are "all in" they will be able, through their Union, practically to control the representation of every Division of Suffolk. If they cannot get their just rights from either of the existing political parties, they hope some day to be strong enough and united enough to run candidates of their own. In their determination to wrest the representation of Suffolk, on the County Council and in Parliament, from the hands of the exploiting classes, and to substitute a true representation of labour, they have certainly been strengthened and encouraged by the visit of the Red Van.

### IV.—LESSONS OF THE CAMPAIGN.

It was felt from the first that a large part of the usefulness of the campaign would consist in the collection of information at first hand about the social condition of the agricultural villages, and in the diffusion of the information so gained among the town workers. A "Daily Report Form" was accordingly prepared for the collection and record of the leading facts of village social life. A reduced copy of it

appears on pp. 19, 20. Some general conclusions from the facts which have been sent in by the lecturers are here briefly stated.

*Population.* The daily reports have laid stress upon the fact that the population of the Suffolk villages is almost uniformly decreasing. Since the campaign commenced, the exact facts have been placed upon record in the first volume of the Census Report (1891), and they entirely agree with the reports of our lecturers.

The total population of Suffolk in April last was 369,351, showing an increase over 1881 of 12,458, equal to 3.5 per cent. Assuming the population to have increased at the same rate as for all England the population in 1891 should have been 398,471, an increase of 41,578. The only registration sub-districts in Suffolk which show any increase whatsoever since 1881 are—

Haverhill (614), Sudbury (464), Bury St. Edmunds (519), Stowmarket (361), Capel St. Mary (144), Holbrook (297), Ipswich (6,761), Colneis (1,226), Woodbridge and Wilford (46), Framlingham (17), Orford (15), Aldeburgh (138), Wenhamston (103), Beccles (897), Kessingland (2,937), Lowestoft (2,407), and Gorleston (2,756).

These are mostly districts including small agricultural towns. In only 5 cases—Ipswich, Colneis, Kessingland, Lowestoft, and Gorleston,—has the increase been as great or greater than the normal English increase for the period—viz., 11.65 per cent.; in the other 12 sub-districts it is smaller, and except in Beccles, much smaller. As to the exceptions, Ipswich is the county town, with important manufactures; Gorleston (a suburb of Yarmouth) and Lowestoft are favourite watering places; Kessingland is also on the coast and near Lowestoft. The other 25 registration sub-districts in Suffolk have all decreased in population since 1881.

On the face of these returns it seems plain that the purely agricultural population of Suffolk is being steadily robbed of the whole of its natural increase. For, taking out Ipswich with its manufactures of railway plant and manure, of boots and shoes, its breweries and tanneries and ship yards, and Gorleston and Lowestoft with their boarding-house industries, there has been practically no increase at all in the population of Suffolk during the last ten years.

The number of inhabited houses in England and Wales has increased by 13.0 per cent. since the census of 1881. But the number of houses in Suffolk has increased only from 78,424 to 81,497, i.e., by 3.9 per cent. Except in three cases (viz., Capel St. Mary, Woodbridge, and Orford) there has been a decrease in the number of inhabited houses wherever the population has gone down; though not always in the same proportion. There are now 3,073 houses in Suffolk in excess of the number enumerated ten years ago; but Ipswich, Gorleston, and Lowestoft account for 2,826 of them.

The causes of this decrease of population become plainly visible when we consider the social condition of the villages.

*Wages and Labour.*—The wages of the agricultural worker in Suffolk when the campaign commenced averaged about 10s. a week for a labourer and 11s. for a "horseman". At that time there was an upward tendency in those places where the Federation had a branch, the Executive having approached the farmers in a friendly spirit and having obtained, practically without a strike and almost without

friction, an extra one or two shillings a week. As the Red Van went ahead of the Federation breaking up new ground the increase of wages became more general. There was much truth in what a labourer said at one of the meetings towards the end of July. Being invited to take part in the discussion, he said—"Well, sir, all I have to say is this; wherever that red cart of yours has been, the men have got a bob or two a week extra. You're the sort of chaps we want more of about here!"

It must be remembered that the increased wages here spoken of are the wages of the busy times of summer. They are of course supplemented by the earnings of harvest, averaging apparently about £7 to £9. But in almost every village the winter brings lower wages—some of the farmers are already trying to reduce the wages now that harvest is over—and "plentiful lack" of employment. The young men walk about the village or go to the towns; the older labourers get parish relief or go into the workhouse. In many cases, starvation tempered by poaching would probably describe the life of many villages in the slack times of winter.

But even in summer there is always an artificial restriction imposed upon the employment of labour upon the land, and, unless the farmers can be freed from the burdens imposed upon them by landlordism, the divorce between the labourer and the land is likely to be accentuated rather than remedied by the increase of wages through the action of unionism. Everywhere the story is told of the steady diminution in the number of labourers employed on the farms. Careful enquiry goes to show that this is not due to the introduction of labour-saving machinery, as is often supposed, so much as to the diminution of the farmers' working capital through the pressure of rent. The fields are often not half cultivated; the winter work of the farm goes undone, so that wages may be saved for rent. The result is that on some farms it becomes a difficult matter to distinguish between the crop and the weeds, and the produce of the fields slowly decreases to a point that makes cultivation practically unprofitable. The lecturers were frequently told that "farming does not pay." The best answer to this assertion lies in the fact that many farmers do make it pay, and pay well; and that these are the farmers who employ the most labour and pay the best wages. Reference was often made to farms which could be had "rent free"; but these were always in some distant village of uncertain locality; and no assurance could ever be obtained that a lease would be given to protect the new tenant against the imposition of a heavy rent as soon as he had sunk his capital in redeeming the farm from the consequences of former neglect.

It is well also to point out the harshness and total inadequacy of the provision made by the *Poor Law* to meet the wants of those who prefer to accept out-door relief in lieu of the workhouse. In general the parochial dole does not amount to more than 1s. per week and half a stone of flour. In one case, that of a strong, healthy young widow, an extra half stone of flour was given on account of her three young children. During the summer a little work may be obtained to supplement the miserable dole, but existence in the winter is only possible through the well known tendency of "the poor to help the poor."

*The Cottages* vary considerably in the points of rent, accommodation and the convenience of gardens. The average rent in the small

villages is from £3 10s. to £6 per annum. The gardens are in nearly all cases insignificant, and in some instances, hardly rise above the rank of back-yards. The sanitation in the majority of cases is defective, and the dwelling is scarcely weatherproof. One labourer stated, "You may shut the doors and windows close enough, but you can't keep the cat out," pointing as he spoke to the crumbling walls of his tenement! General complaint is made in regard to the provision for sleeping accommodation. It is adequate to the requirements of the people neither in point of space nor even of decency, and the moral tone of the community is dangerously threatened in consequence. Hints were not wanting of shocking depravity which was traceable to this cause alone.

The *Water Supply* of the villages was also a frequent cause of complaint. Water—"as thick as swill"—drawn from roadside ponds and supplied by the surface-drainage of the fields, was often the only water obtainable for drinking and other purposes.

In some cases the union of the labourers has already led to reform in these matters. Several enquiries have been held, for instance, into the condition of the "homes" of Ixworth, as a consequence of the agitation initiated by a local Labourers' Association organised by the Vicar of the parish; and in some of the villages the first steps towards the supply of drinkable water have been taken in consequence of the action of local branches of the Federation.

In regard to the *Common Lands*, with very few and almost unimportant exceptions, all the land coming under this classification has long been enclosed, by the successive lords of the respective manors. The tradition still however survives that these lands once belonged to the people, but by some trick they have been filched away, and this is notably illustrated by the fact that in many instances the villagers count it almost a moral obligation to occasionally assert their instinctive feeling of common ownership, by doing a few days' poaching, regardless of consequences!

Complaints as to the disappearance or misappropriation of funds derived from *Poor's Land* and other charities were frequent and loud. In many cases it was known that the poor's land was advantageously let to tenants who regularly paid their rent, but that for years no poor or aged person had derived a farthing of benefit from the provision made for them. The immediate use, which might be made (and was made) of such an instance of the de-municipalisation of land-rent for the benefit of private persons, is obvious. The labourers were advised to take the very first opportunity—at the next Easter Vestry—of making a united demand for the restoration of these parochial lands to common purposes, and to use the whole strength of their organisation to enforce the demand.

The provision of *Allotments* varies greatly in different villages. In a very few cases there appeared to be, as far as could be learnt, a sufficient number of allotments at a reasonable rent. But more usually the supply of allotments is far from adequate to the demand; the land is often poor, though the rent is nearly always two or three times as high as the farmer formerly paid for the same land, or still pays for similar land, "just over the hedge"; and the situation of the allotments is often so far removed from the cottages of those who rent them, as to give rise to serious hindrance to their cultivation and

greatly lessen their value to the holders. The allotments in the neighbourhood of the small towns appear to be eagerly taken up, even at a very high rent, by the town-workers; but it was often found that the difficulty of cultivating them properly after the long hours of labour on the farms, coupled with the suspicion in some cases that the farmer took the allotment produce into account in fixing the wages of his men, somewhat damped the enthusiasm of the agricultural labourers in the subject. Even under these untoward circumstances, the allotments appear to be usually well cultivated, and the vegetables, and sometimes corn, which they produce are a great help during the bad times of winter.

While there is a very general feeling among the labourers that their position will not be permanently improved till they "get on to the land", and that *Small Holdings* would be of much more value to them as a stepping-stone towards industrial freedom than mere allotments, neither of the reactionary cries—of "peasant proprietary" and "no rent"—which are so often wrongly associated with the idea of the Land for the People, appears to have much weight with them. The lecturers have endeavoured to show that the individual labourer has no more right to the *ownership* of the land, than the individual landlord has to the produce of the labourer's industry; and that while it is absurd to suppose that a farmer or labourer cannot cultivate the fields unless he has a landlord to pay rent to, it is equally absurd to suppose that the farmer or labourer is to have the privilege of using valuable land without paying a fair rent for it to the community. The idea of renting their allotments or small holdings, with fixity of tenure and compensation for improvements, direct from a County Council or Parish Council, democratically elected, and of applying the proceeds to purposes of common benefit—*i.e.*, the idea of Land Restoration—is fast making headway among the rural labourers. The leaders of the Federation perceive clearly the difficulties which stand between the labourer, with his miserable wage of 10s. or 12s. a week, and the means of cultivating a holding sufficient for the maintenance of himself and his family. But they believe that these difficulties may be overcome by means of the Union, and, what is more significant, they are already proposing to use the machinery of the Federation with a view to establish a system of *Co-operative Farming* in Suffolk.

In spite of the wage-poverty of the Suffolk labourers, the mental and moral deterioration consequent upon generation after generation being subjected to oppression and chronic injustice, it was singularly instructive and hopeful to note the warm approval shown by the *women* for the ideas advocated at each meeting. The total absence in both men and women of any tendency to wish to substitute charity for a just and economical settlement of their grievances, was strikingly apparent. Everywhere a sturdy, independent and self-reliant tone was the rule, and whilst the people were curiously un démonstrative, their silent attention was according to local opinion a strong proof of their appreciation, and abundant evidence was forthcoming to show that our arguments were ceaselessly discussed and analysed by the villages, for many weeks after we had left.

The *Survival of Scythian* is one of the features of rural life to which much of the detestation of population is undoubtedly due. The domination of the "parson and squire" is almost everywhere the subject of

bitter denunciation. There is very little hostility to the parson as clergyman : but the parson is the nominee of the squire, the friend of the landlord-class, the supporter of "law and order" on the magisterial bench, and the autocratic manager of the school and other local institutions, is denounced among the labourers with an invective which is almost Elizabethan in its freedom and intensity. Where one man owns the land, and is at the same time the "patron" of the living, the whole government of the village, civil and ecclesiastical, is in his hands. The labourers themselves openly describe their condition as one of "slavery". Two illustrations of village life are taken from the lecturer's reports :—

(1) We met a labourer pulling down the cottage in which he had formerly lived for years. According to his account, he had been evicted and the ground cleared for the better preservation of game on the adjoining land, and he had also been "sacked" by the farmer for joining the union and urging the men to demand a rise of wages (which they got). Having no work, he applied to the landlord's agent, who set him on to pull down his own cottage and two others adjoining.

(2) After a good meeting and a most friendly reception at Honington, we drove on to Ingham. The landlord of the only inn in the place refused to put up either the horse or the van or to have anything to do with us, though we were of course willing to pay all charges. [A sympathetic labourer told us that the same thing happened when the Home Kule Van came this way; but that the "Union Jack" Van ("Unionist") had been received with open arms by the authorities, though very coldly by the labourers.] Enquiry showed that it was quite impossible to get any sort of accommodation in the village. After distributing leaflets and announcing that the meeting would be held in the evening—weather permitting—the Van drove on to Fornham All Saints. According to promise, the meeting was held at Ingham at eight o'clock, in spite of heavy rain, at the Cross Roads.

The Earl of Cadogan "owns" every inch of the place, which he bought about two years ago. "Not one of the inhabitants," so they confess, "can call his soul his own". The labourers told us they would be afraid to join a union, as they would expect as a natural consequence a fortnight's notice to leave *both work and cottage*.

Yet after the meeting twelve men gave in their names for the Federation, and a branch was established with a secretary who lives in another village.

The enthusiasm of the villagers in favour of *Village Councils* under these circumstances is not difficult to understand. The supersession of the autocratic government of the squirearchy by a democratically-elected body representative of the village community is one of the first necessary steps in the direction of reform. In some quarters, there is already coupled with this, another ominous demand, that the parson of the parish should no longer be appointed by the local landlord, or by the capitalist to whom the landlord has sold the "right of next presentation", but that he should be elected by the parishioners themselves.

Almost every village has its traditions of the vagaries of *Justices' Justice*, and the strongest feeling in this connection seems to be aroused by the way in which the *Game Laws* are administered. The moral sense of the labourer is instinctively and righteously shocked by a claim, even on the part of the squire, to the ownership of wild animals; and the fact that "So-and-so" done six weeks last winter for taking a rabbit or two "gives, on the whole, a title to respect, but certainly conveys

no idea of moral depravity to his fellow-workers. The withdrawal of land from industrial occupation for the extension of sporting facilities is naturally a sore point with those whose opportunities of employment are thus limited, and it is hardly to be wondered at that any suggestion for the *Compulsory Cultivation of Land*, thrown out during the discussions, was received with murmurs of approval.

Such, in brief outline, are some of the principal grievances under which the Suffolk labourers are groaning. However varied their aspect, in the last analysis they all resolve themselves into so many phases of landlordism.

The monopoly of the land, upon which all the rural workers so obviously and directly depend for their means of livelihood, has been fatal to civil and industrial liberty. There is less freedom, less comfort, less joy in life, among the serfs of the Suffolk landlords than existed on many of the plantations in the Southern States during the days of chattel-slavery. But the men of Suffolk have votes : they are rapidly gaining the strength which comes of union : they are beginning to see that real, true, lasting reform will not be possible till landlordism be abolished.

Neither in the lectures themselves, nor in this Report, has much stress been laid upon proposed *Methods of Land Restoration*. The desire to abolish landlordism, and a sense of the paramount necessity for doing so, must precede all attempts to draft a Bill for effecting that object. When the People at large once recognise the importance of the subject, the demand for practical steps will shape itself naturally. But this much may be said : that wherever the question of methods was raised, whether in public discussion or private conversation, the method suggested by Henry George and adopted by the League—the method of the abolition of all taxation save that on Land Values—was accepted with approval as a just and satisfactory proposal for the solution of a question of admitted difficulty.

It is not of course pretended that a single meeting in a village, even when supplemented by the personal work of the lecturers and the circulation of literature, has converted the labourers into trained political economists. But the meetings have at least helped them to see more clearly than before what it is that hurts them : to give them a new hope of better times in store : to put them into a position to do something to help themselves. The ideal which is shaping itself in their minds may be perhaps best expressed in two words—of which the first includes the second, because it is necessary to its realisation : the two words are

## LAND AND LIBERTY.

## APPENDIX.

## A £5,000 FUND FOR "LAND RESTORATION VANS."

The following letter appeared in the "Daily News" on September 6th, 1891:

## LIFE IN OUR VILLAGES.

SIR,—I can confirm the statements of your correspondent, Mr. Charles Fox, as to the condition of agriculture on the northern borders of Salisbury Plain, and I desire earnestly to supplement his invitation to your Special Commissioner to visit that district. Land in that locality is now let to large farmers at 5s. per acre, only one man is employed on 500 acres, whereas we know by abundant experience that five acres would enable a family to earn a net profit equal to one pound per week. Thus one hundred men might be earning each twenty shillings per week instead of one man receiving 10s. Landlords refuse to let more land to small working farmers in order to keep down wages. In the meantime landlords import fox cubs by the score into the adjoining woods, and rush about after them over the cultivated land of small farmers, thus destroying their crops and making it impossible to keep poultry. In fact, the landlords are taking the country back to barbarism as fast and as far as it is in their power to do so. So strongly have the evils of the present system impressed themselves upon the minds of some of our friends that I am authorised to state that three gentlemen are prepared to subscribe one thousand pounds each, provided two others will do the same, in order to maintain five perambulating vans in our agricultural districts during the next five years. The educational work done during the present summer by the van of the Land Restoration League has been most successful. The experience gained shows that two hundred pounds will maintain a van throughout the greater portion of a year, and five vans will cover a large portion of the country, each van visiting a new village every evening. The villagers, when effectively addressed, willingly enrol themselves in the ranks of local unions and subscribe from their small wages 1d. per week towards the support of local organizations. Thousands have thus been enrolled during the present summer. The great success of the movement has created a desire for its extension. I trust that some of your correspondents will enable me shortly to announce the completion of the required subscription.—I am, yours truly,

WILLIAM SAUNDERS,

Treasurer of the English Land Restoration League.

8, Duke Street, Adelphi,  
London, W.C., Sept. 8.

Since the above was published another Member of the League has promised £1,000—making £4,000 in all—towards the proposed Fund. Subscriptions, large or small, towards completing the £5,000, will be gladly received.

## LAND RESTORATION VAN.—SPECIAL FUND.

STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND EXPENDITURE, APRIL—OCTOBER, 1891.

RECEIPTS.		EXPENDITURE.	
Special Subscriptions, as per list on p. 18	£ s. d.	Purchase and alteration of Van : fittings and utensils ; and repairs	£ s. d.
	- 265 3 0	Lectures (travelling expenses, etc.)	- 32 19 4
		Mr. Boon (including hire of horse)	- 71 15 2
		Stabling of horse : stand for van	- 71 1 0
		Advertisements, bill-posting and distributing, bellman	- 7 18 6
		Printing (including special leaflets)	- 10 16 1
		Postage, telegrams, and parcels	- 38 14 8
		Halls (at Thetford and Ipswich)	- 9 12 0
		Oil, candles, washing, and sundry expenses	- 1 12 6
		Suffolk Directory and newspapers	- 2 0 4½
		Carriage of Van by rail to London, Oct., 1891	- 0 19 9
		Balance in hand	- 1 11 0
	£265 3 0		- 16 2 7½
			£265 3 0

Vouchers and found correct.

SAMUEL J. BOYCE, *Chartered Accountant.*

Examined with the Books and

London, December, 1891.

## LIST OF SUBSCRIPTIONS.

	£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.
Akhurst, W.	-	0	2	0	Brought forward	120	2
Anckettill, H.	-	1	0	0	Pike, Chas.	-	0
Andrews, W.	-	0	10	0	Powell, A.	-	0
Auchmuty, Rev. A. C.	-	0	5	0	Presbury, H. H.	-	0
" (2nd don.)	-	0	5	0	Prime, John	-	0
Barnes, G. N.	-	0	1	0	Reeve, D'Arcy W.	-	20
Bines, J.	-	0	5	0	" (2nd. don.)	-	30
Briggs, Thos.	-	1	1	0	Ridgway, H. M.	-	0
Bruce, W.	-	0	10	0	Saunders, Wm.	-	10
Burroughs, S. M.	-	1	0	0	Sheward, J.	-	0
Cotton, Mrs.	-	2	0	0	Smale, F. J.	-	0
Crawford, C. E. G.	-	1	0	0	Smith, A. R.	-	0
Curtis, Thos.	-	0	2	6	Southey, Mrs.	-	1
Cuttle, G.	-	0	2	6	Taylor, Miss H.	-	20
" Diogenes Fund "	-	50	0	0	Thomas, Miss E. G.	-	0
" (2nd don.)	-	50	0	0	Thomas, S.	-	0
Domoney, P. K.	-	0	1	0	Turner, E.	-	0
Earp, Oswald	-	1	0	0	Turner, Mrs.	-	0
Edwards, Major	-	1	0	0	Walsh, Miss E.	-	1
" (2nd don.)	-	0	10	0	Walter, Miss B.	-	0
Evison, G.	-	0	1	0	Watt, Dr.	-	0
Feakes, Robt.	-	0	2	0	Webster, Wm.	-	0
FixxGernid, C. L.	-	0	10	0	Wheelwright, John	-	0
Fryer, W. H.	-	0	5	0	White, W. H.	-	0
Headlam, Rev. S. D.	-	5	0	0	Whyte, Wm.	-	0
Holding, H. B.	-	0	5	0	Wicksteed, J. H.	-	0
Kennard, C.	-	0	5	0	Wright, W. C.	-	0
Layman, T.	-	0	10	0	" A Friend "	-	0
" (2nd don.)	-	1	0	0	" J. C. B. "	-	0
Lowes, Mrs. L.	-	1	0	0	" C. H. "	-	25
Millington, F. H.	-	0	2	6	" H. H. "	-	15
O'Feely, T.	-	0	2	0	" A. J. M. "	-	20
Ouliet, J. J.	-	0	2	6			

Carried forward 120 2 0

£265 3 0

## ENGLISH LAND RESTORATION LEAGUE.

## The "Land Restoration Van."

## DAILY REPORT.

[This form to be filled up after each Meeting and posted to the Secretary, E.L.R.L., 8, Duke Street, Adelphi, London, W.C.]

Place \_\_\_\_\_ County of \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ 189

Chairman \_\_\_\_\_ Lecturer \_\_\_\_\_

Other Speakers \_\_\_\_\_

Attendance at Meeting (about) \_\_\_\_\_ Hour \_\_\_\_\_ p.m.

Resolution (if any) :—

Moved by \_\_\_\_\_ Seconded by \_\_\_\_\_

Give particulars of vote \_\_\_\_\_

Names and Addresses of sympathisers\* :—

\*It is particularly requested that an effort be made at every meeting to collect the names and addresses of any who are in sympathy with the objects of the League, in order that they may be supplied from time to time with Literature.

Are there any **Allotments** in the Parish?

If so, to what extent?

Allotment Rent per acre? Farmers' Rent per Acre?

Names of largest **Farmers** in the Parish. State acreage and rent, if possible, —

Any **unoccupied Farms or uncultivated Lands**? For what reason?

What is the rate of **Agricultural Labourers' Wages**?

**Rent of Cottages**?

Is the **Population** diminishing? If so, what is the reason locally given for this?

Are there any large **Mansions or Parks** in the Parish?—

Name of Mansion, etc. Name of Owner. Amount at which Assessed.

**Local Organisations.** (Labourers Unions; Political or Social Clubs or Associations; Reading Rooms, etc.), with Secretaries' names and addresses;—

Remarks:—

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

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# INTENTIONAL SECOND EXPOSURE

What are Allotments in the District?

How are they made?

Advantages of allotments. Factors. Rent per acre.

Names of the Farmers of the District. State allotments and ones if possible.

Are unoccupied Farms or uncultivated Lands? If so, what is the result?

What is the State of Agricultural Labourers' Wages?

Rent of Cottages.

Is the Population increasing or decreasing? If so, by how much?

Are there any Mansions Parks etc. in the District?

Notes of the District. (To be filled in by the District Committee.)

Local Organisations. (To be filled in by the District Committee.)  
Social Clubs or Associations. Reading Rooms. (To be filled in by the District Committee.)  
Secretaries. (To be filled in by the District Committee.)

Remarks:

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Witness (District Committee) \_\_\_\_\_

W.C.

By WILLIAM SAUNDERS, L.C.C.,  
(Hon. Treasurer, English Land Restoration League)

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